



General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

15th plenary meeting

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New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 120 (continued)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/52/350/Add.1)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/52/350/Add.1, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication dated 16 September 1997, the Republic of Moldova has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

Address by His Excellency The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Douglas (Saint Kitts and Nevis): The fifty-second anniversary of the United Nations is yet another historic moment for us all. Our shared presence here is evidence that as Members of this great institution we have an opportunity to realize our collective aspirations and expectations. It is necessary therefore for the Organization to ensure that the concerns of Member States, particularly those in the developing world, are not compromised or seen as secondary to the process.

It is essential that the United Nations become a catalyst for improving the quality of life of our citizens and a champion of our fundamental rights and freedoms. Such challenges will require much commitment and strategic thinking. I believe that if we succeed we will have laid the foundation for peace and international security for generations to come.

With our nations and peoples standing at the crossroads of tremendous change, and with heightened



expectations in the fields of human development and poverty eradication, the United Nations must be allowed to assume an even greater role. Saint Kitts and Nevis maintains that the United Nations has the necessary institutional capacity to encompass our collective ambitions and simultaneously to resolve many of the problems facing nation-States.

In the light of the fundamental importance which my Government attaches to a reformed, more functional United Nations, we welcome the appointment of His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan as Secretary-General. His commitment to and wide experience in this institution will help provide the United Nations with the crucial leadership it needs at this critical juncture in the Organization's history.

As we march into a new millennium, with its increasing uncertainties and complexities, the United Nations and its membership will have to recommit themselves to human development in all its facets. Otherwise we will have failed in this decade to accomplish our mandate of poverty eradication.

The growing reduction in much-needed aid and technical assistance to the developing world threatens the further marginalization of our poor countries. This means that countries will grow to depend more on the United Nations. We therefore urge the United Nations to work more closely with developing countries to devise new ideas and pragmatic approaches to improve the standard of living of the world's poor. This reality, we think, lends greater urgency to the Secretary-General's proposals for reform. In this regard, the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis encourages wide discussion of the extensive and far-reaching reform proposals with the aim of arriving at consensus.

We believe that it is vital to restructure and consolidate some of the different areas of services that the United Nations provides. However this must herald real change and increased benefit for Member States. We cannot support a mere transfer of resources from one organ to another without proper safeguards to ensure efficiency and accountability. In the same vein, we hope that development reforms will not sacrifice the effectiveness and distinctiveness of existing organs. In order for the developing world to achieve sustainable growth, we need the expertise, we need the resources and we need the institutional capabilities of existing United Nations funds and programmes.

As we work towards greater efficiency in the management and administration of services, it is important not to undermine positive past achievements. Member States must refrain from marrying conditionalities to the process of reform, especially when these very conditionalities hinder substantial progress in the reform process itself. Saint Kitts and Nevis therefore suggests that in order for reforms to work they must of necessity balance and protect the interests of Member States, not simply appear to reward or benefit a privileged few. Reform is not about creating mechanisms that merely restructure the obligations of States to the Organization. Reform should not be used as an opportunity to compensate current economic strength. Decisions on permanent and non-permanent membership, as part of the reform process, should be the result of a process of debate and consensus-building.

My delegation expects to see greater emphasis on geographic representation and on correcting old inequalities that continue to plague us today. Saint Kitts and Nevis appeals to all States to be careful not to confuse the need for genuine systemic reforms with legally assessed financial obligations to the Organization. Nations demanding reform should also be willing to reform incongruous attitudes and perceptions of the United Nations. We must honour all our responsibilities to the Organization. Progress will require that we all work more closely together to confront the multitude of complicated problems, old and new.

To this end, let us challenge ourselves to find common ground and assist the United Nations in developing the appropriate ideas and strategies that promote our common agenda. This may not be easy; hence the Organization will need to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between policy makers in Government and the business community.

On this note, I should like to acknowledge the magnificent contribution of Mr. Ted Turner to this Organization. He has shown himself to be an exceptional international citizen. We trust that this humanitarian gesture of support for the Organization and its work will make a noticeable impact on the areas designated, and that it will challenge others of like mind to demonstrate their support for the Organization as well.

This show of support is a reminder that only the United Nations can provide the kind of impartial and comprehensive leadership that Member States want. Only the United Nations, with 50 years of successes and

failures as a world institution, has the unique experience to develop essential capabilities to serve its membership. The United Nations has the competitive edge. A United Nations reformed to deal with the modern challenges of a modern era can work, but only if it is allowed to work.

I appreciate well the power of national imperatives and individualism. I also understand well the concerns about supranational institutions. Nevertheless, we have come too far to surrender our global destiny to fear and misconceptions.

When we speak of the development of the human person yet fail to appreciate that economic rights are as fundamental to human dignity as are human rights, we do great disservice to the cause of human rights. However, when we acknowledge these rights then we give more substance to social stability and the process of true democracy.

Democracy is not new to the Caribbean region. It is a way of life, a tradition for our region. We see it as the most practical and useful system of government to advance our people. However, democracy is not simply about institutions or processes. It is about creating an enabling government and an enabling environment in which the ordinary person — the impoverished, the disillusioned, the educated and the rich — feels included and feels that he or she can participate in the decision-making process and feels that his or her dreams can be truly realized.

Because we regard democracy as the most efficient and viable vehicle for sustainable human development, it must deliver and be seen to deliver. The people must be reassured that they can and indeed will rise from the quicksand of poverty through the promise of development. If we fail to deliver on the promise, then democracy will fail. If democracy fails, poverty becomes entrenched and chaos becomes inevitable.

The condition of poverty has for too long been linked with the destiny of small States. The apparent ease with which both are dismissed is a source of grave concern to the Government and the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis. Too little attention is being paid to the economic hardships, political disruptions and social dislocations which we are forced to endure as small developing States. Instead of seeing crucial support from the developed world, we are witnessing increased tendencies towards isolationism and neglect.

In the current wave of globalization, economic stability has become the soft underbelly of Caribbean security, democracy and prospects for sustainable development. If these economies are not strengthened and given appropriate assistance, one lays waste to the tremendous intellectual talents in these countries and exposes the political and social fabric to the nefarious forces that lurk in the region.

Our small countries need institutional support and partnership to help in preparing our youth to adapt their knowledge and skills to changing world circumstances. Such preparation will help make them self-sufficient and more responsive to the unpredictable changes taking place around us.

Additionally, we must create jobs on a continuous basis to inspire our young people and put life's basic needs within reach of their parents. We must not overlook the crucial link between economic growth and long-term political and social stability. Sustainable development in the Caribbean is in everyone's best interest.

My Government does not subscribe to conspiracy theories, but it is acutely aware of the ease with which we can all fall victim to the conspiracy of silence and the conspiracy of neglect. Our economies are under siege; our way of life is threatened; the growth of our countries and people is undermined by forces which are better able to exploit globalization and trade liberalization.

No one in good faith can accuse us of complacency. Our countries have worked hard to keep pace with current economic trends. We have tightened fiscal and monetary policies, and we are monitoring them very closely. We have run the gauntlet of social and economic measures supposedly structured to ensure the economic growth and survival of our various economies.

The road we have travelled has been a difficult one, and we have learned valuable lessons. Still, we continue to suffer exclusion from developed countries' markets for our various products. As a direct consequence, the private sector has become sceptical of its very survival and profitability.

Our banana-producing countries in the region have suffered a tremendous and potentially devastating blow in the wake of the recent panel ruling of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the banana regime of the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of States (ACP). It is

inconceivable that the insignificant but important percentage in access that ACP countries share in this market can pose any meaningful threat to the collaborative interests of multinational producers.

Our banana and sugar industries are major employers and foreign exchange earners; yet, without regard for our survival, they are being challenged with the ultimate objective of dismantling them completely. At the same time, we still do not have ready access to essential technologies vital to making our industries and human resources more competitive and more efficient.

We contend that trade liberalization, without the proper mechanisms to protect the small and the weak, does not promote fair trade. Where is the fairness of fair trade? How, therefore, will our small island developing States find new and sustainable ways to respond to the growing needs of our population? How will we be able to stem the brain drain, the migration of human resources searching for a better standard of living?

Our countries have undertaken to diversify our economies despite the obvious dislocations within our societies. We remain committed to democratic institutions, and we continuously allocate scarce resources to human development. Our Governments in the Caribbean have been working more closely with the private sector as true partners in development. We have enacted legislation to facilitate increased investment opportunities and to encourage foreign direct investment and domestic savings.

Nonetheless, with every step we seem to fall prey to the perpetual and constantly evolving demands for more extensive changes without any regard for the effects on our countries and our people. Globalization, with its insatiable appetite, and the ravenous forces of unrestricted free market and trade liberalization are forever famished. Why must the rules which are always in a state of constant flux be to the detriment of small resource-poor States?

In the coming years, not only will we still be struggling to combat poverty, but the concepts of sovereignty and governance will also be seriously challenged as we endeavour to cope with the complex implications of forces that face our societies and menace our democracies. The transnational nature of information, of capital, of labour and of technological advances will not spare our tiny countries the trying consequences unleashed by globalization.

Despite these difficulties, Saint Kitts and Nevis will not become a nation of mendicants. We will give priority to the right of our citizens to economic well-being. For what good would it do if our people achieve their human right to exist but are denied the right to live dignified lives?

The Labour Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis has undertaken to build 1,000 new, affordable homes by the end of this century. We believe that all our citizens have the right to live in dignity and to have access to the basic necessities of life. We have already turned over 100 new houses, and by the end of this year we expect 300 families to be moving into new homes in Saint Kitts and Nevis. This is the commitment of the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the development of its citizens.

I have said in the past, and I maintain now, that we must abandon the practice of using gross national product per capita to measure standards of living for people in the developing world. How can the developed world and multilateral agencies deny assistance to countries on the basis that such a country has reached this artificial threshold? Are people in the developing world not entitled to a higher standard of living, or must they always straddle the boundaries of poverty and exist only at levels which the developed world considers acceptable indicators of human progress?

It is important for us to dedicate our energies to the logic of prevention. In Saint Kitts and Nevis we believe strongly that prevention is better than cure. We believe in enabling our peoples to have a life free of poverty and despair. The Secretary-General has called for greater efficiency in management, greater resource mobilization and redeployment of potential savings to the development fields. This is long overdue.

It is also the duty of Member States to ensure that new resources are targeted at development. Such a process will have to be guided by and nourished with vision, political will and an appreciation of the global imperatives of sustainable development and poverty eradication. It will involve foresight, profound analyses, and a willingness to look beyond national self-interest. Working together to shape our collective destiny could enable us to reduce the risks of future political and social conflicts.

I believe firmly that the special circumstances and vulnerability indices of small States must be at the forefront of international debate. If there were ever a

question as to the vulnerability of small States, I challenge the Assembly to recall the unfortunate situation on the Caribbean island of Montserrat. This reality clearly demonstrates that it takes only one disaster, only one violent act of nature, only one volcanic eruption to dislocate an entire population, decimate an entire economy and destroy the entire social fabric of a people. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis, like other Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries, has extended a willing hand of health and social support to the people of Montserrat. We continue to provide employment and other business opportunities to those who have come to our shores in Saint Kitts and Nevis from the island of Montserrat. I urge the international community to join the Caribbean in taking prompt, decisive and tangible steps to assist the people of Montserrat.

Montserrat is a microcosm of our precarious existence. Hence, we urge the international community to fulfil its promises under the Barbados Programme of Action and other commitments to the developing world. Our survival as a region is intimately interwoven with our environment, and our physical and economic limitations should not be further burdened by the transshipment of hazardous waste through our waterways. Such actions are a flagrant violation of our human rights and an affront to our sovereign dignity.

As we work to fulfil the dreams of those who came before us, I trust that we will succeed in developing confidence in the capabilities of the United Nations and entrust it with realizing our common objectives. At the same time, there will be occasions when we must challenge ourselves to appreciate that some problems in international affairs require indigenous approaches and remedies. We must, therefore, yield to such imperatives.

One case in point is the Middle East, where the current crisis calls for a nurturing of mutual trust and a clear willingness to understand the need for all the parties to come to the bargaining table. Saint Kitts and Nevis believes that durable peace and security are the common desires of the nations involved. Success requires boldness and commitment. Genuine progress will come not from violence, recrimination and mistrust, but through partnership and dialogue. Saint Kitts and Nevis urges both sides to use negotiation and creative confidence-building measures in addressing their differences.

Saint Kitts and Nevis also urges the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to commit their collective energies to the pursuit of common approaches to resolving

the current impasse that divides them. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis maintains that progress on this issue requires sustained dialogue, political will and the goodwill of all. We also believe that the remarkable strides the Chinese people on Taiwan have made in the last two decades should not be squandered. The international community can benefit, and stands to benefit significantly, from the economic, technological and social advances of Taiwan.

In conclusion, fulfilling the expectations of our citizens is not a simple task, but we cannot and must not become discouraged. I hope, therefore, that as we endeavour to accomplish our goals Member States will not continue to make unreasonable demands on this Organization while refusing it the requisite tools and resources for appropriate action. Our world needs a stronger United Nations. Our countries and our peoples need its intellectual supervision and potential for impartiality. Let us not try to relegate it to the periphery, lest we risk serious consequences in the future. Let us commit to writing a history of which we can be proud, lest history should hold us in contempt for squandering our children's heritage. Let this session of the General Assembly be a watershed when collective efforts were translated into appropriate action and well-deserved results.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Chong Ha Yoo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Yoo (Republic of Korea): I congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly and pledge to you our full support and cooperation. I also pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, whose devoted efforts enabled the fifty-first session of the General Assembly to come to grips with some of the core issues affecting the future of the United Nations.

We meet at a time when a number of profound questions loom large over humankind. Does the international community possess the necessary will and means to make the twenty-first century an era of wider peace, deeper justice and greater prosperity? Can we eradicate poverty and protect the environment? Are we able to ensure that fundamental human rights are respected and promoted throughout the world? Can we reinvigorate the United Nations so that it can be the means to advance these ends? To each of these questions we can and must respond in the affirmative.

The Secretary-General, through his recent reform proposals, has provided the international community with a timely compass to help guide the way. In the view of my delegation, the Secretary-General's latest proposals contain a wide spectrum of reforms designed for the overall enhancement of the United Nations system. We are confident that many of the Secretary-General's ideas can be translated into action through open-minded deliberation, with the full participation of Member States at this session. In this respect, I wish to recall the statement of 10 August by the Group of 16, including the Republic of Korea, which expressed support for the Secretary-General's reform initiatives.

While institutional reform is a prerequisite for a more efficient United Nations, it is clear that without more reliable financial support the Organization cannot make an efficient transition into the twenty-first century. Only when Member States discharge their financial obligations in full, on time and without conditions will the United Nations safely and smoothly reach its ultimate destination of ensuring a better future for humankind.

It is in this spirit that Korea has made it a firm policy to pay its assessed dues in full and on time. We will actively participate in concerted efforts to adopt a more equitable scale of assessment at this session. My Government will consider a gradual move from the contributors' Group C to which Korea presently belongs, to Group B in terms of peacekeeping assessment. This is a reaffirmation of our enduring commitment towards both the financial viability of the United Nations and its efforts to maintain international peace and security.

Another crucial task before us is the reform of the Security Council. At the last session, my delegation actively participated in deliberations on the issue, on the basis of our own experiences as a Council member. We share the view that the profound changes in international relations over the past several decades fully warrant

expansion of Council membership. Given the diverse and sensitive concerns of all Member States, however, this issue must be handled with the utmost prudence and seriousness. Every effort should be made to work out a consensus formula, while bearing in mind that haste makes waste.

One of the most significant and promising developments in international relations over the past half century has been the emergence of a considerable number of medium-power countries with the capability to make a meaningful contribution to the cause of international peace and security. Any plan to reform the Council should provide those countries with opportunities to serve on the Council with reasonable frequency, commensurate with their capabilities and contributions.

We also believe that Council reform should be based upon consideration of the problems and shortcomings associated with the Council's operations thus far, particularly with respect to the system of permanent membership and the right of veto. Convinced that more can be done to make the Security Council a more representative, efficient and democratic body, we will remain open-minded and flexible with regard to any proposals that can move this important process in the right direction.

As a member of the Security Council for the 1996-1997 period, the Republic of Korea has made its due contribution to the cause of international peace and security. We have actively participated in reaching important decisions to enhance peace and stability in the countries of some parts of the third world that have been plagued by civil conflicts over the past several years. We also organized, during Korea's presidency of the Council last May, an open debate on the refugee issue. The debate resulted in the adoption of a presidential statement in June on protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations. This clearly reflects the fact that the Security Council has come to recognize that security applies to people as much as to States in an era of intra-State conflicts.

Despite many positive developments in the security landscape of the post Cold-War era, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains a priority concern to people and Governments alike. My Government believes that universal adherence to the existing non-proliferation regimes represents an essential step towards realizing that common objective. In this regard, we welcome the entry into force of the Chemical

Weapons Convention, and urge those States which have not yet acceded to the Convention, including North Korea, to do so at the earliest date.

The proliferation and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines has been the cause of enormous human suffering and injury, particularly among civilians. Given the magnitude of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines, the Republic of Korea has decided to extend for an indefinite period its moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines, which was to expire at the end of this year. We believe, however, that each country's legitimate security concerns should be given due consideration in addressing this matter.

I wish to reiterate that, while we fully support the noble crusade to protect innocent civilians from anti-personnel landmines, a sweeping ban cannot be a satisfactory answer for a country like the Republic of Korea, which faces the real and present risk of a recurrence of all-out war, and whose heavily populated capital is only 25 miles from the military demarcation line. In our view, the draft convention adopted in Oslo two weeks ago does not fully accommodate concerns which we have consistently expressed, or the exceptional nature of the security situation on the Korean peninsula.

The international community has consistently endeavoured to wipe out all forms of terrorism from the face of the earth. However, terrorism still persists as one of the major threats to international peace, exacting a heavy toll on innocent lives. The Republic of Korea has experienced many barbaric and cowardly acts of terrorism and still lives under its constant threat, including recent open threats aimed at our free press. We strongly support international efforts to combat terrorism and underline the importance of upholding the principle of zero tolerance. Given the global spectrum of terrorism, we also believe that the United Nations can play a central role in strengthening the international anti-terrorism regime. In this regard, we look forward to an early adoption of the convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings.

In this era of interdependence among States, the international community cannot remain indifferent to the under-development of much of the world. My delegation therefore welcomes the adoption of the Agenda for Development at the previous session of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General's reform proposals designed to enhance the United Nations economic and social initiatives as well as its development activities. For that reason, we support the Secretary-General's suggestion

to enhance the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council and to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. We expect that the various proposals for a funding modality for United Nations development activities will be discussed fully at this session.

Korea, now a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, will participate more vigorously in South-South cooperation projects with a view to playing a bridging role between developed and developing countries. In an effort to expand assistance to the least developed countries, we have participated in bilateral cooperation projects with the Economic Commission for Africa since 1995, and we plan to undertake a programme for the development of Africa for the period 1998 to 2000.

My Government, jointly with the United Nations Development Programme, established in Seoul this past May the International Vaccine Institute. This Institute is devoted to the research and development of vaccines for children around the world, particularly those in developing countries. The inaugural meeting of its board of trustees is scheduled to convene in Seoul next month. We look forward to generous support from Member States for this worthy goal of keeping our children free from debilitating diseases.

Turning now to environmental issues, my Government welcomes the adoption of the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21 at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly and stands committed to participating faithfully in its implementation. In particular, we are pleased that Korea's proposal to conduct a feasibility study on the transfer of publicly owned technology was supported by developed and developing countries alike and was included in the Programme. The results of the feasibility study, which is being funded by my Government, will be presented at the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development next April. Through these efforts, we hope to expedite the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and to promote international cooperation for environmental protection.

During the special session, there was also an in-depth discussion on the safe management of radioactive waste, an issue of serious concern to many countries. My Government attaches great importance to the fact that the special session adopted a comprehensive set of

arrangements on the environmentally sound management of these dangerous wastes. We strongly urge that these arrangements be firmly and strictly adhered to and respected.

With regard to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we hope that a realistic and achievable outcome will emerge at the Kyoto Conference to be held in December this year.

Next year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1998, we are also to undertake the five-year mid-term review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in June 1993.

In the view of my delegation, human rights is an area where the United Nations has made significant contributions over the past half century, not just as an international forum for discussion, but also as a centre for coordinated action. Seen from this perspective, the consolidation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights, as proposed in the Secretary-General's report, should certainly inject new vitality into United Nations efforts to enhance the coordination of its activities in the area of human rights. I wholeheartedly welcome Mary Robinson's assumption of the post of High Commissioner.

My Government also welcomes the remarkable progress made by the Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, which we believe will serve as an effective deterrent against violations of international humanitarian law. We expect that the forthcoming conference in Rome will adopt the statute of the court, paving the way for its establishment at the earliest possible date. From a historical perspective, the creation of a permanent international criminal court will set a benchmark for the attainment of international criminal justice in the coming century.

As rightly pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, the developments in the present decade have clearly strengthened the argument that respect for human rights is a precondition for political stability and socio-economic progress. One of the United Nations' most compelling responsibilities is to further promote universal respect for human rights and deter gross human rights abuses and political oppression. In this context, we are gravely concerned at the dire human rights situation in North Korea. We truly hope that, in the not-too-distant future,

our compatriots in the North will come to enjoy basic human rights and freedoms, as other peoples do around the world.

Let me now turn to the situation on the Korean Peninsula. In April last year, the Republic of Korea and the United States jointly proposed four-party talks, involving the South and the North of Korea, the United States and China, which aim to establish a permanent peace mechanism on the Korean Peninsula and build mutual trust between the two sides of Korea. The four-party talks, when realized, will offer rare chances of facilitating peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and throughout North-east Asia.

If inter-Korean relations are to move forward and the outstanding problems of the Peninsula are to be resolved peacefully, there is no alternative to dialogue and reconciliation between the South and the North of Korea. We sincerely hope that North Korea will realize the importance and value of improved inter-Korean relations through its participation in the four-party talks. While the talks are in the interest of all concerned, no one stands to benefit more than North Korea itself. The construction of a solid and durable peace structure on the Korean Peninsula will also produce generous dividends which can help North Korea in addressing a host of domestic challenges it faces, including its economic difficulties.

It is regrettable that the recent preparatory meetings for the four-party talks ended without any tangible result. Nevertheless, we will continue our patient effort to engage North Korea in a process of dialogue. We appreciate the continued support of the international community to this end.

In the meantime, the Republic of Korea will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to North Korea. The plight of innocent civilians in the North and, in particular, vulnerable groups such as malnourished children, is a matter of serious concern for the Government and people of the Republic of Korea. As a matter of priority, my Government will provide assistance to the vulnerable children in North Korea in close cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund and other interested countries. In this connection, we would like to stress the vital importance of transparency in the distribution process. We hope that such transparency can be enhanced through more effective monitoring by the international organizations concerned.

This year has seen some positive developments in international efforts to resolve the long-standing North Korean nuclear issue. The 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework has now entered the implementation stage, with the ground-breaking ceremony for the light-water reactor project in North Korea last month under the auspices of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). For the first time in nearly five decades, over 100 engineers and technicians of both sides of Korea are working together on the construction site. We hope that this welcome development will be a harbinger of a new era in inter-Korean relations. My Government takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to all those countries which have extended generous financial contributions to KEDO.

While the ongoing light-water reactor project undertaken by KEDO is an important step forward in eliminating the threat of nuclear proliferation in the Korean peninsula, it must be emphasized here once again that the ultimate resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue is possible only when North Korea complies fully with its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as with the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula signed by the South and North Korea in 1991.

When the United Nations was founded in 1945, who could have foreseen the extent to which international relations would develop during the next half-century? No doubt, a number of geopolitical structural changes will occur in the coming century as well.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century, this session of the General Assembly could well prove to be a turning point by providing a forum for reconfiguring the architecture and priorities of the Organization. Facing a new array of challenges, this session should point the way towards a brighter future and a renewed sense of optimism. Together, we can forge a stronger United Nations and, through it, the foundation for a century of peace, prosperity and justice. The Republic of Korea stands ready to do its due part.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore, His Excellency Mr. S. Jayakumar.

Mr. Jayakumar (Singapore): Let me congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I also thank our outgoing President, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his untiring

efforts. He catalysed a change in our approach to Security Council reform and set a new trajectory for it.

For several years, we have all recognized the imperative of United Nations reform. Today, the issue of the moment is still reform. This summer, the Secretary-General challenged us with a package of reforms that he accurately described as the most extensive and far-reaching in the 52-year history of this Organization. This is, of course, not the first time a Secretary-General has attempted to remake this Organization. But now that the more extravagant of post-cold-war hopes for the United Nations have faded, I believe that this package represents a more focused, realistic and practical approach. We congratulate the Secretary-General for his initiative.

The Secretary-General's objective clearly is to enable the United Nations to do better what we all require it to do. We all take the United Nations importance as axiomatic. Therefore, his intention to reconfigure the United Nations management and strengthen the United Nations ability to perform its core functions should be generally acceptable to the majority, even if every particular element of his proposals has not been fully elaborated or may not be entirely to everyone's taste.

In the larger interests of this Organization, we should all welcome the thrust of the Secretary-General's proposals and not take issue with too many details. Singapore adopts such an approach. We have, for example, questions about some specific details of his proposals to place the United Nations finances on a sounder footing and to streamline its operations. But we have nonetheless contributed actively to the effort to streamline budgetary and administrative procedures in the Secretariat and will continue to do so.

By taking a pragmatic and eclectic approach, we hope to help move the reform process forward, even if we may have questions on specific aspects. We will continue to work with the Secretary-General and other Member States to make the United Nations a more efficient and effective Organization — one that will serve the interests of all its Members, big and small, developing as well as industrialized.

The Secretary-General's proposals on the United Nations management, administration and structure have sometimes been directly or indirectly linked to the ongoing effort by Member States to prepare the United Nations political leadership for the twenty-first century

through Security Council reform. We are not confident that this is the correct approach. We have been engaged in this broader effort for almost four years. It is a fact that the process has been difficult. Progress has been slow. We have reached the conclusion that the prospects for further progress are not good.

We have arrived at this conclusion with great reluctance and without rancour. Progress has not been slow because of the ill will of one State or another. Prospects for further progress are dim not merely because one country or another has lacked the will to cut through the web of vested interests. The reasons are more fundamental. They go beyond the volitions and intentions of individual countries and are embedded in the nature and inescapable realities of international organization in an international system that is still largely defined by relations between sovereign States.

No great Power, or even a Power with aspirations to greatness, has ever been willing to submit its own vital interests to United Nations jurisdiction. This fact of international life underlies the current reform stalemate. The necessity of United Nations reform may be widely accepted. But what the great Powers want is not a strong United Nations *per se*. They want a United Nations just strong and credible enough to serve as an effective instrument of their will and policies. It is only small countries that are more inclined to take the United Nations on its own terms and in its own right. Small countries are not necessarily more virtuous — we merely have fewer options.

This reality has been underscored by our discussions on Security Council reform. The really crucial decisions that will allow Security Council reform to move decisively forward or stall it indefinitely are going to be taken in Washington, London, Paris, Beijing or Moscow. It has not been clear that the current permanent members really want change except on their own terms and in circumstances that will not erode their current status and prerogatives. Critical ambiguities in their positions have held up progress and will continue to do so unless clarified.

One school of thought is that we should decide on Security Council reform during this General Assembly. I can well sympathize with the frustrations of those who feel that the current debate is going nowhere. But precisely because this is so, we need to ask: What is it that we are going to decide upon? The answer is far from clear. Indeed, the entire Security Council reform process is in danger of being lost in a wilderness of logical

contradictions and ambiguities. Please permit me to spell out some of these contradictions and ambiguities.

Several permanent members have been categorical only in their desire to see Japan and Germany as new permanent members. Many other countries, including my own, would agree that, when general agreement is reached on the expansion of the Security Council, Japan and Germany should be new permanent members. But an equally large number of countries, and I believe Japan and Germany are among them, would also agree that any general agreement on expansion must include some developing countries as new permanent members to reflect new international realities.

On this point most permanent members have been far less clear. When challenged, several of them have recently for the first time conceded that in addition to Japan and Germany they would in principle be willing to accept three permanent seats for developing nations from the regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America. This is welcome progress. Nevertheless, important ambiguities still remain.

How will the three developing countries be chosen? It has been suggested that individual countries be chosen by a two-thirds vote of the membership as a whole. It has also been suggested that they could be subject to some system of rotation within the regions.

Both, however, are problematic concepts. Can a country really legitimately represent a region if it is chosen outside the region? Will the two-thirds membership prescribed by the Charter really be sufficiently familiar with conditions outside their own respective regions to make an informed and legitimate choice, binding on regions of which they are not members? Then, conceptually, is it not inherently contradictory for a member to be said to be permanent but nonetheless be subject to rotation? Who will such a member represent: its own national interests or the region's interests? Can it really represent the latter? Indeed, what is the regional interest? How will it be determined? Is the regional interest necessarily synonymous with the interests of the larger members of a region? Can a rotational system work for any region except Africa, where it is already an established principle?

None of these questions will be easy to answer. They have been debated for the last three years without satisfactory answers. But unless there are clear answers,

my concern is that suggestions for a differentiated selection process for permanent members from among the newly industrialized and newly developing countries will only lead to permanent stress, divisions and conflict for most regions, or it will lead to a two-stage decision-making process where the elevation of Germany and Japan will not for many years, if ever, be matched by any degree of consensus for the developing nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Such a discriminatory situation would be clearly unacceptable to a majority of Member States, including many of those that aspire to permanent status.

But even if we could simultaneously reach agreement on the identity of the three permanent members from among the developing countries, together with Japan and Germany, there are further complexities of equal importance. What will be the status of the new permanent members?

Even those current permanent members that have strongly supported Germany's and Japan's aspirations have been silent on whether Germany and Japan should have the veto. Even treaty allies of Japan and Germany, countries that have pledged to go to war at their side and for them, have taken no position on this crucial question. This, in our view, makes it even more difficult to believe that any developed country permanent member would ever allow any developing country to acquire the veto, even though they have made it clear that they want to retain unrestricted use of the veto for themselves.

The powers of new permanent members are not questions that can be deferred to a later date merely to make it easier to quickly determine the identity of the new permanent members. They are intrinsic to the very notion and definition of permanent membership. Is a new permanent member really a permanent member if it does not have the same powers as the original five permanent members?

Article 27 has been controversial from the very founding of the United Nations. There is now a wide consensus that the use of the veto should be curtailed with a view to its eventual abolition. The reality, of course, is that this is not going to happen any time soon. Any attempt to curtail the veto will be vetoed. Undemocratic though it may be, the veto will be with us for the foreseeable future. And it is not without a certain utility in so far as it helps prevent conflicts among the major Powers which could undermine the United Nations. It has been argued that the veto acts as a fail-safe mechanism. The veto will prevent those countries that are so essential to the maintenance of

peace and security and to the operation of the United Nations that they deserve permanent status from being compelled to take any action that would lead to conflicts among themselves.

Now, if this justification for the retention of the veto by the original five permanent members has any validity, then the question that arises is whether any new permanent member that is not given the veto is really deserving of that status? Would such countries really enjoy the international stature and the capability and clout to make such a crucial contribution to international peace and security as to warrant being given permanent status? And if not, why give them permanent status? Could they not make financial and other contributions to the United Nations in some other, way as many countries with no such aspirations already do? If there is a need for new permanent members, and I believe there is a need, then the veto is not a question that can be postponed or discussed separately from the issue of their identities.

Three out of the five current permanent members have also been adamantly opposed to the expansion of the Security Council beyond a total of 20 or 21 members. This effectively blocks any expansion of the Security Council.

Let us suppose that agreement is reached on the identity of the five new permanent members: Japan and Germany and three from the developing countries, whichever they may be. But if the current permanent members that argue against an expansion of the Security Council beyond 21 members remain firm in their position, this would mean only one additional non-permanent seat for the 165 remaining members of the United Nations, all of which have a desire and a right to serve the United Nations on the Security Council at least occasionally. This inequitable arrangement would certainly be rejected by the majority. Moreover, creating five new permanent members in a Security Council of 21 will seriously upset the present balance between permanent seats and non-permanent seats. This is also a situation which will not be acceptable to the majority of the Member States. It will certainly not command the support of the two thirds of the membership required by the Charter to effect any change to the Security Council's present composition.

Those that have argued for an expansion of the Security Council to no more than 21 members have done so on the grounds that this is the maximum number that can function effectively and efficiently. These are

concerns that we should all share. Nobody wants an ineffective or inefficient Security Council. But no one has yet made a convincing argument that a Security Council of, say, 26 members, as has been proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement, would be any less efficient or effective than a Security Council of 21. This is of course assuming that effectiveness and efficiency are not narrowly defined as merely making it more difficult for any of the current permanent members and their allies to ensure that nobody can prevent them from having their own way.

In any case, can we really decide on the effectiveness and efficiency of an expanded Security Council before we know what the powers of the new permanent members are going to be? This leads us into a tautological situation. We cannot know how an expanded Security Council consisting of an expanded number of permanent members will operate because, as I argued a moment ago, the definition of what constitutes a new permanent member cannot be separated from the question of the veto. And the current permanent members have refused to pronounce on this. At this point, effectiveness and efficiency as an argument against a Security Council of more than 21 breaks down completely.

I could go on with my analysis. But I hope I have demonstrated that several critical aspects of the positions of the major countries on Security Council reform need further clarification before progress can be made. I do not believe that the ambiguities and contradictions are going to be resolved soon. They are the natural consequence of sovereign States pursuing their national interests.

The position of permanent members will have a decisive influence on whether or not Security Council reform moves forward. As things presently stand, it seems clear that what will not evoke a veto from any of the current permanent members will not command the support of the two-thirds membership required to make the necessary Charter changes. At the same time, what would attract the support of the vast majority of United Nations Members is more likely than not to provoke a veto. This is where, like it or not, we currently stand.

A similar case could be made on the closely related question of financial reform. This too, has its own deep complexities; its own intrinsic contradictions between what would be acceptable to the majority and what the major Powers want. Not every change is necessarily for the better. We should therefore make progress cautiously, especially on such fundamental questions. This is why the Non-Aligned Movement has wisely decided that efforts at

restructuring the Security Council should not be subject to any imposed time-frame.

Of course, there has been an evolution in the positions of the major Powers over the last four years. There will be further positive changes over time. But it will certainly take time. No country readily changes the status quo if it benefits from the status quo.

My point is therefore that, given this reality, it would be a historic mistake to artificially link the Secretary-General's managerial, administrative and structural reforms to far more contentious questions of Security Council or other matters that would require the support of the two-thirds membership needed to effect Charter amendments as defined in Article 108. There is no need to handicap ourselves in this way. Not all aspects of the Secretary-General's proposals are equally acceptable to all Members. But, taken as a whole, it will be far easier to reach a general agreement on more aspects of the Secretary-General's proposals if they are considered in themselves and not linked to more politicized and therefore more intractable questions.

This is not to say that Security Council or financial reforms are unimportant. Of course, they are important. We should continue to work on them. The issues I have raised are complex. But there is no avoiding them. I remain confident that with patience and sincerity we will eventually find our way out of the thickets of ambiguity into which we have wandered. I am confident that we will eventually succeed in our common endeavour to enhance the ability of the Security Council to exercise leadership in the management of global affairs and enhance its legitimacy to do so.

But this is only one facet of United Nations reform. The Security Council is not necessarily the only United Nations body that is important, nor even always the most important. The Security Council is empowered to act on behalf of the membership as a whole on questions of international peace and security. It has no direct mandate to act on behalf of the membership as a whole on many other urgent international questions. International peace and security are no longer the only definition of high international politics. Development and the environment are two areas that are obvious and of increasing importance. Such issues in which the Security Council is not the lead United Nations body have risen in prominence on the post-cold-war international agenda. They will remain high priorities for the majority. There

can be no legitimate leadership role for the United Nations that does not deal with such issues.

Herein lies the critical importance of the Secretary-General's proposals. They can make an immediate and tangible difference to issues affecting the entire international community which are beyond the scope of the Security Council. Action on the Secretary-General's proposals, therefore, should not have to await general agreement on Security Council reform. By focusing on his proposals, by subjecting them to a thorough and positive discussion, I believe we can move urgently needed United Nations reforms forward at a faster pace than has hitherto characterized the reform process. And we can still remain seized of, but not hostage to, issues that may take more time to command general agreement or that require Charter amendment.

The President: I now call on Mr. Amre Moussa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

Mr. Moussa (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Mr. President, to you and your friendly country, I am pleased to extend my warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. Your expertise on United Nations and world issues will undoubtedly assist you in wisely discharging the work of the General Assembly.

At the same time, I wish to express our appreciation to your predecessor for the efforts he exerted in connection with the discussions relating to United Nations reform.

The world is currently passing through highly interwoven and complicated circumstances, where progress and its horizons mingle with backwardness and its dangers while humanity takes pride in such achievements as economic progress and the development of technology and informatics, it is still suffering from the practices of terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, the spread of corruption, the overflow of refugees, the challenges posed by war criminals, crimes of genocide and mass murder, and the negative effects of racism and religious discrimination.

All this gives rise to a situation which requires the international community to cooperate and become interdependent in its endeavours in a manner that helps it live in security and to progress confidently. This cannot take place unless the United Nations become the focal point and the centre of its concerted actions.

This prompts us to accord priority in Egypt's statement to this session to the issue of United Nations reform. The outcome of this session, and probably subsequent sessions will constitute a true litmus test of the credibility of determination and the objectivity of resolve regarding the present and the future of the United Nations.

Evolution of the United Nations relies on a number of facts and requisites. The principles of democratization and multilateralism are widespread, market economy mechanisms are growing, and scientific progress and information technology are accelerating. This necessitates reaching agreement on and drafting new rules for international conduct.

It has been shown that the end of the cold war in no way sufficiently guarantees the non-eruption of conflicts, tragedies and wars. By the same token, the risks emanating from the outbreak of rampant international confrontations have not disappeared. The root causes of national and international disputes still persist. On the other hand, weapons of mass destruction are readily available and are even on the rise. In addition to the absence of any substantial progress in the field of nuclear disarmament, there exist clandestine military nuclear programmes not subject to any international supervision in strategically sensitive areas such as the Middle East region.

While globalization is a rapidly growing phenomenon, and given its impact on the security and prosperity of various societies, national legislation and regulations are finding it difficult to cope with this phenomenon and to regulate international relations accordingly. Most of the developing countries do not possess the same capacity as the developed ones to speedily effect the necessary psychological, cultural and legislative adjustments. Therefore, the United Nations represents the proper mechanism for the formulation of an international consensus on the rules governing all these developments, and the provision of necessary assistance to the developing countries to meet and regulate their requirements.

Mr. Karaha (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

While we agree on the need to change the United Nations and increase its effectiveness, we might not be as agreed on the means to achieve that objective. In this context, I wish to state Egypt's view of the main

principles and points on which the United Nations reform process should be based, in addition to a preliminary comment on some of the Secretary-General's recent proposals in this respect.

It is important that the United Nations reform take place in conformity with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter and the mandates accorded to each of the United Nations principal organs. The General Assembly, representing the general membership of the United Nations, has to adopt clear decisions which reflect the general consensus with regard to the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report. Such consensus should be built through serious intergovernmental dialogue characterized by maximum transparency and sense of responsibility.

We concur with the Secretary-General's position that reforming the United Nations administrative machinery is not a substitute for the political will of the Member States to enhance the role of the Organization. Thus, the first step towards reform is the formation of a clear collective will to strengthen the United Nations system through a comprehensive approach in the interest of all.

While we would generally welcome merging departments with similar activities as well as slashing a number of posts if the General Assembly so decides, we wish to stress that rationalizing expenditures must not be done at the expense of efficient performance. Administrative reform should not diminish the Organization's capacity to fully implement the programmes adopted by the Member States. Nor should it adversely affect the equitable geographic distribution in the composition of the Secretariat.

We are also in agreement with the Secretary-General's diagnosis of the real threat facing the United Nations, namely the non-payment by some major Powers of their assessed contributions, be they to the regular budget or to the budget of peacekeeping operations. Since these arrears are part of the Member States' obligations under the Charter, their payment should be made in full, immediately and without conditions. Any attempt to make payment conditional will only complicate the entire reform process.

The sharp and steady decline in the resources allocated to development, coupled with the absence of enthusiasm on the part of some for the fulfilment of their obligations, have negatively affected the implementation of many programmes adopted by Member States. This impels us to review the funding modalities of the United Nations

operational activities for development so as to ensure their effective performance.

We concur with the Secretary-General on the importance of achieving the system-wide integration of United Nations programmes that deal with development. We still look forward to hearing concrete ideas on how to achieve more comprehensive coordination throughout the United Nations system as well as on how to decentralize the working methods of the regional economic commissions. These commissions play a cardinal role in implementing the Organization's priorities, such as poverty eradication.

Lastly, some of the other measures proposed by the Secretary-General, particularly those relating to how to address the financial crisis, should be studied further with a view to reaching arrangements which would enjoy general consensus and help overcome this crisis.

Therefore, we invite the General Assembly to study the important proposals made by the Secretary-General. The Assembly should then come up with recommendations that clarify the Member States' aspirations and the modalities of implementing their specified priorities in the medium-term plan, together with means of promoting the vital role of the Organization in the coming decades.

In the course of reforming the United Nations, the Secretary-General touched upon the elaboration of a new concept and structure of the Trusteeship Council. This is a matter that requires extensive discussion and study to clarify the impact and dimensions of the proposed concept, as it is totally different from the current mandate of the Council. Besides, it is imperative to discuss the significance of, and the need to put under collective trusteeship, topics set forth by the world community in well-established international agreements that express the will of the international community as a whole. Under those agreements, mechanisms and organs have already been set up to oversee their implementation.

Also, within the context of changing the role of the Organization, we note that the Secretary-General's proposals entrust the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with many additional responsibilities and competencies at the expense of the functions entrusted to the Centre for Human Rights. In our view, this is not in line with what is important in the management of the human rights field. Here we recall some recent sagacious appeals for updating the approach

and legislation of the international community in the field of human rights in order to better reflect the diverse contributions of various cultures and civilizations in our contemporary world to the promotion and enrichment of these rights and the protection of the freedom of individuals and societies. Although some political considerations stood in the way of including the valuable contributions of some of those cultures and civilizations in the main human rights instruments — foremost among which is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — these sagacious appeals reflect the desire to enhance the contribution of various world cultures in the protection of human rights. Such enhanced and diverse contributions, in the framework of a world consensus, could spare the international community any accusation of negligence, double standards or bias towards a single cultural concept.

In the field of disarmament, I should point out that for 50 years, the United Nations has given due regard to disarmament issues. It has given high priority to matters relating to weapons of mass destruction in general and nuclear weapons in particular. A consensus on this high priority emerged in the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and has been reiterated ever since. Egypt remains faithful to this high priority.

I now turn to the Security Council. Past Assembly sessions, especially the fifty-first, witnessed protracted debates on the reform and restructuring of the Security Council. Undoubtedly, reaching agreement on this issue is one of the main pillars on which reform of the United Nations must be built.

In this regard, Egypt reiterates its emphasis on and commitment to the key principles adopted at the ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in New Delhi, as well as the elements adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Harare in connection with the Council's enlargement and the need for full conformity with the relevant provisions of the Charter.

Therefore, first, there should be no partial or selective expansion or enlargement of the membership of the Security Council. Secondly, efforts at restructuring the Council should not be subject to any imposed time-frame. While recognizing the importance of treating this issue as a matter of urgent attention, no effort should be made to decide this issue before general agreement is reached. Thirdly, efforts should be made to rationalize the exercise of the veto. Fourthly, the improvement of the working methods of the Council should be given equal importance. Fifthly, any resolution with possible Charter-amendment

implications as to the size, the composition or the allocation of the Council seats must be adopted in strict conformity with the provisions of Article 108 of the Charter. Sixthly, it is important to study the principle of rotation and to agree upon the eligibility criteria for it in connection with the proposed expansion in the permanent-membership category. Such an agreement could help avoid the divisions and feuds that have begun to surface. Lastly, if there is no agreement on the expansion of permanent membership, expansion should be limited to the non-permanent category.

As to eligibility of States for permanent membership in the Security Council, and with a view to our commitment to what will be agreed upon within the OAU in connection with a system of rotation, we propose that the criteria for eligibility should include the degree of present and future economic development, historical weight, geographic location and size of population. They should also give due regard to the role played by a country in the maintenance of global and regional peace and security, including its ability to contribute to peacekeeping operations. Further, similar regard should be given to such a country's endeavours to preserve the interests of the region to which it belongs.

Egypt's regional and international contributions within the framework of Africa, the Arab and Islamic worlds and the Middle East region, as well as among the developing countries and emerging economies, undoubtedly qualify it to shoulder the responsibilities of permanent membership in a new, expanded Security Council providing balanced and equitable representation. However, Egypt will remain committed to the African consensus in this regard. I listened carefully to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of Singapore, and I suggest that the points he raised should be studied and given due attention by the General Assembly and the committees working in the field of the reform and expansion of the Security Council.

The non-aligned countries called for a reconsideration of the veto power, which contradicts the principles of democracy that must characterize contemporary world order and prevail both among and within States. As a first step towards that goal, we suggest that the use and scope of the veto power should be restricted to specific actions such as those which relate to threats to international peace and security and which are taken under Chapter VII of the Charter. We can also agree on excluding specific matters from the use of veto power, such as provision to the Council of the

information necessary for exercising its competence; humanitarian issues, including respect for instruments of international humanitarian law and ceasefire resolutions; and the selection of the United Nations Secretary-General.

Security Council reform and the improvement of its working methods require a re-evaluation of the sanctions regimes imposed by the Council, including their routine periodic review, their lifting and whether the regime in its current form achieves the goals for which it was instituted. If sanctions are intended to influence the behaviour of certain States so that they abide by international legality, it would be only logical to amend the way these sanctions are currently implemented in order to take into account the related humanitarian aspects and the sufferings inflicted upon the peoples. And after compliance, these sanctions must be lifted.

In all cases, it is important to consider setting specific time-frames for sanctions so that they do not end up being, in effect, a people's punishment. Discussions in this respect under "An Agenda for Peace" and the initial agreement reached thereon can be a viable basis for starting serious deliberations with a view to effecting positive changes in the current sanctions regime.

I turn now to the situation in the Middle East, where the peace process faces a serious crisis. The most apparent manifestation of this crisis is that the concept, principles and bases of the peace process are being completely shattered and squandered. The vision spawned in the peoples' minds of the sort of peace, as agreed upon at the United Nations and in Madrid, has started to dissipate. Trust has been replaced by doubt, and hope by frustration and despair in a tomorrow where justice will materialize and peace will prevail.

The peace process is based on governing principles, namely the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). At the heart of these principles are the land-for-peace formula and safeguarding the rights of the parties according to the balance struck by the Security Council and affirmed at the Madrid Peace Conference. This certainly applies to the three tracks of negotiations between Israel on the one hand and Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians on the other. The Oslo accord did not deviate from the same principles, nor did it challenge their terms of reference or binding nature. On the contrary, it led to the recognition that the Palestinian people are a people with legitimate national and political rights.

It also recognized that the only way to establish peace and security in the region is through peaceful coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, based on equality, justice, and, of course, Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the establishment of normal relations between the States in the Middle East.

These principles and concepts gave rise to a process of building bases for peace and its possibilities. In spite of the obstacles and the problems which confronted the process of negotiations, the credibility of the search for a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict still existed.

This quest for peace had become a strategic choice characterizing the policies and orientations of the region's Governments, impelling the peoples of the region to envision a future Middle East under a just and comprehensive peace. Various methods and mechanisms for cooperation which would enable the region to achieve the requisite levels of development and progress were discussed. Despite the frequent diversity of views and their conflicting nature at certain times, that trend represented a healthy phenomenon: it indicated that the peoples of the region are already convinced of the peace concept. The only thing that remained was how to reinvigorate the method of achieving it.

Alas, confidence was lost, credibility was shaken and the peace process lost much of its momentum. For this, and for the present serious situation, the current Israeli Government's policy is responsible. Settlement activities, as well as Israel's reneging on agreements and commitments reached; making a mockery of legal accords; challenging the two sponsors of the peace process; pushing for confrontation; and giving rise to an overall feeling of despair could not but result in frustration and destruction. This will lead to a catastrophe whose responsibility, we hasten to underline here and now, lies squarely with the current Israeli policies.

This serious crisis inflicted on the peace process by the Israeli policies was recently considered by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the States members of the League of Arab States. The Council adopted the following points, which constitute a unified Arab position on the current situation.

The first point is a rejection of the Israeli Government policies designed to undermine the peace process, its denial of the principles and bases of this

process, its evasion of the implementation of the commitments, undertakings and agreements reached within the context of the peace process, and its unilateral measures aimed at imposing a *fait accompli* in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan, along with its aggression against southern Lebanon.

The second point is the upholding of a just and comprehensive peace as a strategic choice and objective on the basis of the principles of the peace process, and in particular of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the attainment of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, and a reaffirmation of complete Arab solidarity with this position.

The third point reiterates that Israel's breach of the principles and the bases of the peace process, its backtracking on the commitments, undertakings and agreements reached thereon and its procrastination in implementing these commitments have resulted in the current setback of the peace process. These Israeli policies have also led to a reconsideration of the steps taken towards Israel within the framework of the peace process. Full responsibility for this lies with the Israeli Government alone.

Fourth, negotiations on the three bilateral tracks should be resumed. On the Syrian track, negotiations should be resumed from wherever they ended. The two parties should commit themselves to what has already been achieved. On the Lebanese track, negotiations should centre upon the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). And on the Palestinian track, negotiations should be resumed on the basis of implementing the contractual agreements reached, including the commitments of the interim period. Parallel to that, final status negotiations should start in order to lead to the Palestinian people's exercise of their right to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent state.

Fifth, the Council welcomed the American position as crystallized during the visit paid by the United States Secretary of State to the region this month. There was consensus regarding cooperation with United States policy as expressed by Mrs. Albright in her statement of 6 August 1997 to the National Press Club in Washington. That policy, which was reiterated during her recent visit to the Middle East and contacts with the States of the region, reaffirms the terms of reference of the Madrid Peace Conference, in particular the principle of land for peace, the implementation of the relevant Security Council

resolutions, the realization of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, and the commitment to abstain from taking unilateral measures that undermine the permanent status negotiations. We stress the need to build on this positive position on the part of the United States, and call on Israel to respond positively to it. In this context, the steps that the Israeli Government is required to take to foster the peace process should be within the framework of key issues, not that of issues of a secondary or formalistic nature.

Sixth, the European role played in support of the peace process is welcome and the importance of its revitalization should be stressed.

Seventh, international legality in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolutions should be upheld and implemented.

A stable and just peace must be built on a strong basis of comprehensive security arrangements that take due account of the apprehensions, concerns and viewpoints of all parties. This can materialize only when Israel accedes to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as it is the only State in the region that has not yet done so. We should proceed forthwith with the implementation of President Hosni Mubarak's initiative to free the Middle East from all weapons of mass destruction and their delivering vehicles. It is a source of regret for us that so far no practical steps have been taken to rid our region of the threat of nuclear weapons. This might lead to the proliferation of such weapons. Consequently, I call upon the General Assembly and the NPT depositories to take the necessary steps to ensure Israel's accession to the NPT and for the prompt undertaking of serious negotiations to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in implementation of the resolution adopted by the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT held in New York in April 1995. Such a nuclear-weapon-free zone could be established as a first step towards ridding the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction.

Before concluding my remarks regarding the Middle East, I would like to refer to the serious situation in Iraq. I would like to highlight the importance of respecting Iraq's sovereignty and of ending the suffering of its people. Furthermore, the islands of the United Arab Emirates should be returned, and the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over these islands should be respected. The Lockerbie issue should be brought to an

end in conformity with international legality. The territorial integrity of the Sudan should be preserved and respected. A settlement of the problems of Somalia should be reached. A healthy climate for relations should be created in the Middle East between States of the region and neighbouring countries, based upon mutual and balanced commitments along with a common interest in maintaining positive relations for the benefit of everyone.

Turning to Africa, I wish to refer to the ministerial meeting convened by the Security Council last week to consider the sources and causes of African conflicts and how to contain and resolve them. As I said in my statement before the Council, Africa has come a long way on the road of political and economic reform. What is needed now is to revitalize existing international initiatives in support of development and stability in Africa. Such international support is also required to solve the problems of refugees, enhance democratization and strengthen regional and subregional integration. This requires the fulfilment of promises by the international community to establish a true partnership between Africa, on the one hand, and the United Nations system and the international donor institutions on the other. This also requires strengthening existing cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity in conformity with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter.

Since the dawn of history, the Mediterranean dimension has been an important framework for Egypt, influencing and being influenced by the centres of civilization and enlightenment in the region. Inasmuch as Europe — Eastern and Western — has been the main partner with Egypt in trade transactions, tourist flows and cultural interactions, so has Egypt been and will continue to be a major active party in ensuring stability and regulating a veritable interaction between the European dimension of Mediterranean security and the Mediterranean dimension of European security, in the full meaning of the comprehensive concept of contemporary security.

In this context, President Hosni Mubarak in November 1991 presented to the European Parliament his well-known initiative of establishing a framework for consultation and cooperation among the Mediterranean countries. By mid-1994, this idea was crystallized when the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of 11 Mediterranean countries held in Alexandria their constituent session for the Mediterranean Forum, which convened its fourth session last July in Algiers, where the ministers unanimously agreed that the Forum was a unique gathering

for frank dialogue and a mechanism for the formulation and testing of ideas and coordination of positions.

Through its chairmanship of the cultural working group of the Mediterranean Forum, Egypt looks forward to contributing to strengthening cultural cooperation among the member countries and stressing the common cultural features of the Mediterranean personality, based upon the integration and interaction of civilizations, rather than conflict and confrontation between them.

A similar exercise is currently under way with regard to Euro-Mediterranean interaction, in the framework of the Barcelona process. The second ministerial conference, convened in Malta last April, provided a good opportunity for frankness and an exchange of views to activate and correct the path of this historic process that brings together countries of the European Union and those of the south and the east of the Mediterranean. In so doing, this process will truly lead to the creation of a balanced partnership among all parties, as well as the establishment of a common zone of peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean basin.

In this context, Egypt follows with keen interest current developments in the Balkans, a region closely linked to the Mediterranean region, especially with regard to developments relating to the situation in Bosnia. Egypt believes that the only way out of tension in that region is that of international legality, the full and speedy implementation of the Dayton Agreements and the trying of war criminals, which represents an essential step towards establishing justice and stability in this region. Egypt reaffirms its partnership with the international community, the United Nations system and the donor institutions in the development and reconstruction of Bosnia in order to help heal the wounds of years of war and destruction.

I should not fail to address the concerns of Egypt and other developing countries regarding a number of challenges accompanying the process of trade and investment liberalization. These challenges are manifested in the continued pursuit by some of unilateral and arbitrary policies instead of abidance by the rules and regulations of the international trading system that we all worked so hard to adopt within the framework of the World Trade Organization.

This is in addition to the growing trend we witness today on the part of some of our trading partners who resort to covert protectionist practices, which hide behind

noble considerations such as environmental protection, respect for labour norms and human rights, in order to serve some narrow self-interests, to justify the restriction of access to markets and to impose trade sanctions.

On another plane, we should be well aware that the liberalization of investment is not a panacea for every malaise besetting our economies. Despite our interest in attracting investments, and despite our efforts to create a climate conducive to the flow of investments, the fact still remains that investment agreements should strike a fair balance between protecting the rights of the investor, on the one hand and ensuring the rights and interests of the receiving States, on the other.

A year ago, from this rostrum, I called for concerted efforts against attempts to marginalize the role of the United Nations.

If we are still awaiting the development of rules of international conduct under a new world order that is still evolving, we then urgently need to ensure the survival of a strong and effective United Nations that can lead the way for us in this nascent world order.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of New Zealand, His Excellency Mr. Michael John Powles.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): May I begin by congratulating the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We are in good hands as we begin our work during what the Secretary-General has called "the reform Assembly."

I know, too, that my Foreign Minister, on whose behalf I am speaking, would want to warmly congratulate the outgoing President, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, on his efforts during the past 12 months. It has been a challenging time, and he has demonstrated the decisive leadership we all expected of him.

Two years ago, at the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, world leaders undertook to give the twenty-first century an Organization equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established. With the year 2000 now only 27 months away, we are still far from that goal. This is a matter of great concern to New Zealand. We firmly believe in the United Nations as a vehicle to a better life for the world's citizens, and not just for those who live now. We have a responsibility to strengthen the Organization for our

grandchildren and beyond. We must not let them and ourselves down by allowing an unreformed United Nations to slide into increasing irrelevance.

We do not pretend the process of reform is easy or finite. As the Secretary-General has said, "Reform is not an event; it is a process." [A/51/950, para. 25] Our own involvement on the intergovernmental track, including co-chairing the Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System and the Working Group on an Agenda for Development, has given us a good appreciation of the complexities involved in producing positive outcomes acceptable to 185 Member States.

We know the Secretary-General faces the same issues with his 16 July package. As with any package, it is inevitable that some Member States will find fault with individual elements. But we are firmly of the belief that the package should be viewed as a whole. This will be for the greater good of the Organization. Difficulties with individual elements of the package should not be allowed to unpick the overall good which is in it. We appeal to Member States to acknowledge this reality and to give the Secretary-General their generous support. It is small countries like New Zealand, and developing countries, which, as we see it, stand most to benefit from what the Secretary-General is trying to achieve.

To reform and strengthen the United Nations effectively, we see a need to redistribute resources away from administration and into areas which are important for those of us who place a high priority on the United Nations itself. We support efficiencies, not cost-cutting. The crucial difference between the two is that one approach seeks simply to save money without regard to the impact on the Organization. We cannot support this. The United Nations is too important to us to allow such a downgrading.

An approach based on efficiencies allows us to reinvigorate the United Nations by reinvesting the money saved from outdated administrative practices. This is central to the Secretary-General's package. In particular, the proposal for a "development dividend" channelling resources freed by administrative efficiencies into strengthening the development activities of the United Nations is most welcome. We can certify from our own national experience that the sort of management reforms proposed in the package do indeed lead to a reduction in administrative overheads, allowing more to be delivered in terms of substantive programmes.

At a time when development funds are diminishing, the significance of this step should not be lost. New Zealand is a country that is increasing its overseas aid — by 40 per cent since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Rio Summit. Our contributions through the United Nations system have also increased by nearly 50 per cent over the last five years. But the global trend is the opposite, particularly among the larger traditional donors. It is becoming harder and harder for Governments to meet their Charter commitment to promote the economic and social advancement of all peoples. One of the modest outcomes of the last two years of reform efforts within the United Nations has been the elaboration of an Agenda for Development reaffirming the primacy of development, setting objectives and recommending ways of achieving them. But, with the best will in the world, implementing that Agenda will come to naught in the absence of adequate funding.

The Secretary-General's reforms are designed to deliver more for development. Equally important, they are designed to boost confidence in the United Nations, confidence which two weeks ago was given tangible form by Mr. Ted Turner's billion-dollar grant to assist United Nations agencies in key development activities. That generous offer has given the Organization a real boost and could be a catalyst for leveraging further private-sector funds for development. We must support the Secretary-General's efforts to make the United Nations the best vehicle for delivering such assistance.

Member States need to trust the Secretary-General to fulfil his responsibilities under the Charter: to give effect to the policy directions which they set. We need to be clear and realistic in the priorities we set for the United Nations. We cannot mandate the Organization with more and more new tasks and somehow expect these to be achieved within current resources. And, having set the priorities, we must resist the temptation to micro-manage. This will involve a sea-change in the way Member States have become accustomed to operating. The Fifth Committee still makes decisions about staff numbers and placement within the Secretariat, administrative decisions that in any modern organization would be the responsibility of its managers.

We know that the transitional process of change will not be easy for those working in the Secretariat either. But — and we are conscious of our own experience in New Zealand in instituting public-sector reform — the managerial and results-based budgeting proposals in the July package will improve work performance and will deliver greater job satisfaction to those working for the

United Nations. The Organization's most important resource is its people. The package recognizes the vital importance of investment in staff. If the best and brightest are to be attracted to and retained by the United Nations, they must be recruited, trained, promoted and paid according to procedures which are as good as the best employed by Member States.

It is also important to stress here the loyalty owed to the Secretary-General by those who work for him. He has the right to expect their full support for his leadership and for the initiatives he puts forward. Anything less would be dishonourable, would subvert due process and would potentially disenfranchise Member States. It could not be tolerated.

I referred earlier to the intergovernmental track. It is worth touching on the key issues of Security Council and financial reform.

On the former, New Zealand will judge specific proposals for enlargement of the Security Council by the yardstick of democracy and the representativeness of the institution as a whole. Increasing the proportion of permanent to non-permanent members runs counter to this principle. Nor could a package on Security Council reform be acceptable to us without substantive proposals opening up and modernizing the workings of the Council. Sunshine, an American jurist once observed, is the best disinfectant. Member States must continue to participate in the debate in the search for a consensus solution.

On financial reform, New Zealand is strongly concerned about the crisis facing the United Nations. It is true that there are problems with the scales of assessments for both the regular and the peacekeeping budgets. The present floor has a negative impact on smaller, vulnerable nations, such as the South Pacific island countries, New Zealand's neighbours. This is just one example of the kind of problem that needs to be addressed.

But those who want to see changes made to the scale need to offer genuine inducements, not threats. We cannot accept that any Member State is entitled to withhold payments unilaterally or that the assessment of those countries that will not pay their dues should be picked up by others. All assessed contributions must be paid in full, on time and unconditionally. It is a violation of international legal obligations to do otherwise. This must be regarded with the utmost seriousness by Member States. It undermines the Organization's ability to

operate. It penalizes, through damage to the Organization, those Member States that abide by their obligations. When the State responsible for the largest percentage of arrears owed to the United Nations is also the richest, and when that State in addition attaches conditions to the payment of only a portion of what it owes, it is understandable that these actions should generate real scepticism in this Assembly.

This sorry state of affairs must be resolved quickly. But it can be resolved only on the basis of a credible commitment that all conditions will be eliminated now and that all payments will be made on time. And that means in January each year.

I would like to raise another reform issue which has not featured prominently in discussions to date, namely United Nations regional groupings. It seems to us that this is an issue that deserves examination. The groupings are in need of revision to bring them up to date with present-day geopolitical realities. It is anomalous, for example, that our Pacific island neighbours, members with us of the South Pacific Forum grouping, belong to the Asian Group while, for historical reasons, New Zealand belongs to the Group of Western European and Other States. The fundamental importance we accord our membership of the institutions of the South Pacific Forum, of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council and of the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and our relationship with ASEAN itself, should be able to be better reflected in the regional groupings. We accordingly see value in a reconfiguration of New York electoral groupings to bring them more in line with those used elsewhere in the United Nations system, where New Zealand in most cases sits with our South Pacific partners and our East Asian neighbours.

Developments in other regions will result in further anomalies in the present structure. We see at a future stage some long and complex negotiations over regional seat allocations for a revised system of regional groups. New Zealand of course will join with others in negotiating new and equitable allocations of seats. While we look forward to the outcome of that process, we realize that it will not come overnight. In the meantime, and as a matter of high priority, my delegation is working to forge a closer relationship with the Asian regional group in New York.

I would like to close my statement by focusing once more on the utmost importance of Member States' giving positive endorsement to the Secretary-General's package at this General Assembly, as New Zealand will be doing —

not only because it provides a positive and concrete start to a reform process, but also because the alternative of not supporting the Secretary-General will, in our view, seriously undermine the credibility of the United Nations.

For two years the United Nations has been involved in the current reform exercise. But none of us can pretend that reform is an end in itself, or that introspection is an ongoing excuse for inaction. The United Nations exists to deliver concrete, substantive assistance to the hundreds of millions most in need. No amount of self-analysis is a substitute for that. Moreover, sustained emphasis on introspection will erode the Organization's capacity, and possibly also its will, to perform the tasks for which it was created.

The challenge now is to embrace the bold programme of reform outlined by the Secretary-General, to use this General Assembly to begin to implement it, and then to direct our energy where it rightly belongs, to taking practical steps to reduce suffering and build a better and more peaceful world: like drawing up a solid, practical programme for alleviating poverty in the coming decade; like establishing an international criminal court which will ensure that individuals are held responsible for war crimes; like supporting and enhancing the United Nations capability for preventive diplomacy; and like invigorating the United Nations capacity for peacekeeping.

These are the standards by which the real success or failure of the United Nations will be judged. New Zealand is determined that the verdict will be a positive one. Working together, we can ensure that it is.

The Acting President: The next speaker on my list is His Excellency Mr. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, Minister for External Relations of Sudan, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Taha (Sudan)(*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset I would like to express my congratulations to the President on the confidence the General Assembly showed in him by electing him to preside over fifty-second session. We have no doubt that his experience and capability in multilateral diplomacy will assist him in conducting the deliberations of this session towards success. We assure him of the cooperation and support of the delegation of the Sudan.

I would also like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the President's predecessor, His

Excellency Ambassador Razali Ismail, for his distinguished efforts and bold initiatives within the context of strengthening the role of the United Nations and the improvement of its methods of work.

Likewise, we would like to extend our congratulations to the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. In a very short time since the assumption of his post, he has demonstrated enthusiasm, ability and patience in leading this Organization. This has been embodied in his initiative to reform it, improve its methods of work and enhance its stature.

We commend the genuine endeavours of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations system. In this connection, the Sudan will stand by his side until the United Nations realizes the purposes for which it was established, chief among which is the strengthening of peace and international cooperation for the achievement of development and the eradication of poverty, particularly in Africa and in developing countries.

We would also like to affirm the keenness of the Sudan that the programme of reform should result in strengthening the ability of the United Nations to respond to humanitarian, social and developmental issues undertaken by the Organization. Furthermore, the reform should lead to the consolidation of the participation of developing countries in the Organization and their equitable representation in the Secretariat.

The Sudan calls for giving the reform endeavours enough time. The results and recommendations of the Open-ended High Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, adopted by the General Assembly, should be given special attention. My country reaffirms its intention to participate effectively in the meetings to be agreed upon within the proper framework, with the aim of reaching a consensus on all aspects of the reform.

The Sudan attaches special attention and interest to the issue of reform of the Security Council through the enlargement of its permanent and non-permanent membership, and the improvement of its methods of work. Our interest derives from our deep-rooted conviction about the importance of enhancing transparency and democracy in the work of the Council, so as to respond to the changing realities and the current challenges facing international peace and security, in accordance with the principles and provisions of the Charter which define the duties of the Council in the peaceful resolution of

conflict — far from using it as an instrument of peoples' punishment.

The Sudan, while welcoming the efforts made for the reform of the Security Council, reaffirms the necessity of observing equitable geographical representation and preserving the principle of state sovereignty. In this connection, we would like to reiterate our commitment to the New Delhi Declaration of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as our commitment to the African position taken at the Harare summit.

We wish to stress the importance of linking the right of veto to the aspects relating to enlargement of the Council and improvement of its methods of work, in a way that would secure a comprehensive consideration through deliberate negotiations relative to all aspects, within a democratic and open-ended membership.

It is important to deal with the points that the Foreign Minister of Singapore made in his statement this morning. At this time last year I informed the Assembly of our efforts to establish peace in the Sudan, which resulted at that time in the signing of the "Peace Charter". Today, it is with honour and pride that I convey to this distinguished gathering that we have succeeded in evolving that "Peace Charter" into a comprehensive "Peace Agreement" signed in April this year by the Government and the fighting factions and political entities in southern Sudan. The Agreement has been endorsed by the Sudanese Parliament, and thus it has, *par excellence*, become one of the most important political events in the history of the Sudan.

The Khartoum Peace Agreement provides for a lasting settlement to the Sudanese problem. The negotiating parties have reached a formula which identifies a framework for peaceful coexistence in the country. In the Agreement, the principle of citizenship constitutes the basis for rights, duties and equality of participation of all Sudanese in the responsibilities of public life, without discrimination as to race or religion. It further consolidates the principle of democratic evolution in the Sudan. It clearly defines the question of power sharing between the state governments and the federal authority within the federal system in the country. In addition, it provides for the bases and criteria for wealth-sharing in the country.

With regard to public liberties and human rights, the agreement guarantees the same liberties and rights embodied in divine revelation and in the texts of relevant

international instruments and agreements. In that way it will have a considerable influence in consolidating and guaranteeing human rights. Furthermore, the agreement allows for the people of southern Sudan to exercise their right to self-determination through a free referendum to be held at the end of a four-year transitional period.

An additional, complementary arrangement was agreed upon to prevent hostilities and ensure a ceasefire between the signatory parties with the aim of enhancing the requisites for peace and stability. Furthermore, in accordance with the collective will of the people of the Sudan, a presidential decree granted an unconditional general amnesty in respect of all crimes committed and all civil and criminal claims asserted during the 14 years preceding the signing of the agreement.

In our quest to enhance the scope of a comprehensive and lasting peace, an agreement was reached last week with the only remaining faction that was still carrying arms, thereby allowing for the resumption of peace talks on 28 October 1997 in the Kenyan capital under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). I am honoured to be able to renew the determination and to express the eagerness of the Government of the Sudan for making the forthcoming talks a success.

The courageous steps taken by the Government of the Sudan towards achieving a just and lasting peace have been widely commended and appreciated by many States in the world. One of its early positive results was the beginning of the voluntary repatriation of displaced persons and refugees from neighbouring countries.

We call upon the United Nations, the international financial institutions and our development partners to contribute to the resettlement of the returnees by shifting from humanitarian assistance to programmes of rehabilitation and the provision of developmental assistance needed to consolidate the foundations of peace, which has been sought for many decades. This call derives its legitimacy from the spirit and content of the Security Council ministerial-level meeting held on 25 September to discuss the current situation in Africa. The meeting consolidated the link between peace and development, the latter being one of the basic human rights.

In the same context, in striving to develop a system of good and responsible governance, the Sudan has witnessed important constitutional developments, which have been manifested in the establishment of a national committee for

preparing the draft of a permanent constitution to be submitted to the legislative body and then presented to the people in a referendum.

In the economic field, in support of a market economy and policies of liberalization, we have taken serious steps towards the rationalization of public expenditure, the privatization of the public sector, the abolition of restrictions on internal and external trade and the promotion of investment. These policies have led to the reactivation of the economy and reduced the inflation rate from 114 per cent at the beginning of this year to 28.5 per cent in August of this year. Furthermore, we have achieved a positive growth rate of 5.5 per cent and stability in the rate of exchange of the national currency. This progress was commended by the International Monetary Fund mission in its report to the Executive Council of the Fund last August. However, the major obstacle to the accomplishment of the economic reform programme continues to be an insufficiency of external resources needed to boost production. We therefore appeal to the donor countries and the international financial institutions to provide the necessary resources for the completion of the process of economic reform. We also reaffirm that the Sudan welcomes and encourages private and joint investments in all fields.

As for the problem of debt, it is imperative to address it within a comprehensive international framework and not on a bilateral basis, so as to make possible the building of a world economic system based on justice and equality among all States without distinction.

In recognition of the importance of regional economic cooperation, African States have taken steps towards the revitalization of the African Economic Community, in addition to the subregional economic organizations, all of which need the support and assistance of the international community.

We should not fail to stress the aspirations of Africa with regard to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the importance of following up on the outcome of the World Food Summit in the context of achieving food security for the nations of the continent and of the necessity to provide the required resources to the countries concerned. In this context, the Sudan reaffirms its readiness to effectively contribute to the programmes and action plans for the provision of food, with the serious participation of the international community.

Economic development on the one hand and security and stability on the other are two sides of the same coin. In speaking about poverty eradication in the African continent, we must stress the need for the realization of peace as a means to guarantee the security of the African peoples on the one hand and to accelerate the continent's development on the other hand. In this respect we commend the positive developments in Liberia and we hope that this model will encourage our brothers in Somalia and Congo (Brazzaville) to stop the bloodshed. We also hope that in Sierra Leone the endeavours being led by the countries of West Africa will succeed in solving the problems facing that country. Africa's need for security, stability and development requires it to become a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Africa needs assistance in clearing anti-personnel landmines, left behind by civil wars in a number of its countries, including my own.

The Sudan supports the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and of its Secretary-General, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, to restore peace and stability in many African States. With regard to the formation of African peacekeeping forces, we stress the need to harmonize any measures taken in this matter with the resolutions and positions of the OAU. Africa should have the right, through its regional organizations, to take the initiative and to lead in this matter.

While addressing the subject of economic hardship in Africa, it is incumbent upon us to mention the exasperating effects of the imposition of sanctions, in particular those imposed on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. We call for the settlement of this issue on the basis of the proposal presented by the OAU and the League of Arab States, supported by the Non-Aligned Movement.

We support the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement to lay down specific measures and rules for sanctions and to strictly observe the provisions of the Charter. We share the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization for this year about the negative effects of sanctions on peoples. We look forward to the proposals he has promised to present in this regard.

In Asia, we welcome the return of Hong Kong to the parent country, the People's Republic of China. We are following with interest the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Afghanistan. We hope that the parties in conflict will cooperate with the United Nations so as to reach a formula for understanding and agreement. We

also call upon the international community to support the continuous efforts to establish peace in the Korean peninsula.

With regard to developments in the Middle East, the Sudan believes that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace cannot be achieved without a total commitment to the principles of justice and the complete preservation of the rights of the Palestinian people and the Arab States in the region, or without a commitment to the agreements and accords reached by the parties concerned. Israel should abandon its settlement policies and withdraw from all the occupied Arab territories on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, which continue to be the point of reference for a peaceful settlement and for the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

We agree with what the Secretary-General stated in his report to the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly about the seriousness of the situation in the region. The Secretary-General warned of the consequences of the settlement policies in the occupied Arab territories and the attempts to effect demographic and legal changes in Al-Quds aimed at its Judaization and the alteration of its legal, geographical, historical, religious and civilizational status. The Sudan calls upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities in the face of the deterioration of the situation and the escalation of confrontation to save the region from the spectre of war that appears over the horizon as a result of the unacceptable Israeli practices. Furthermore, the Sudan is strongly opposed to Israeli attempts to impose collective sanctions on the Palestinian people whatever the justification or the pretext.

In the domain of international relations, the Sudan follows policies and holds firm positions based on its commitment to international and regional charters, the respect of good-neighbourliness and regional cooperation and the suppression of terrorism and threats to regional and international security.

The Sudan continues to call for the abandonment of conflict and for regarding the interest of peoples as a priority that supersedes transient disagreements.

The application of the slogans of pluralism and democracy that characterize the present epoch in the progress of humanity essentially requires respect for the diverse cultural contexts of the peoples of the world. Those cultures should be allowed the opportunity of free

and equitable self-expression in order to enrich human experience and elevate the values of tolerance and acceptance of the other. That would lead to the restriction of recourse to violent and extreme expressions of injustice resulting from isolation and cultural arrogance.

All religions uphold the principles of tolerance, the acceptance of pluralism and coexistence with others. The Holy Koran says:

"Say Ye: 'We believe in Allah and the revelation Given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference Between one and another of them: And we submit to Allah.'" (*The Holy Koran, II:136*).

In this context, we support the statement of the German Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding the need to encourage dialogue between civilizations to replace conflicts and rivalry, in order to build a world of tolerance and cooperation and so that slogans of pluralism and democracy may not themselves become a pretext for cultural hegemony.

The adoption by the United Nations of the idea of setting up a body to promote dialogue between religions and civilizations would pave the way for the realization of that noble objective and would reinstate respect for lofty moral values. It would act as a strong deterrent to such social ills as drug abuse, the escalation of violence and terrorism and family disintegration, thus clearing the way for a better future for humanity as it enters a new millennium.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, His Excellency Mr. David Levy.

Mr. Levy (Israel) (*spoke in Hebrew; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): I would like to begin by congratulating the President on his unanimous election to preside over the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It is my hope that at this session the Assembly will be successful in bringing nations closer to each other and in finding ways to address the challenges that face all countries and nations, north and south, east and west.

I also wish to congratulate his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for the manner in which he carried out his duties.

We mark this year the twentieth anniversary of the peace initiative of the late Prime Minister of Israel, Menachem Begin, and the late President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat. Those leaders, with their historic decision and their courageous leadership, pioneered the way towards the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab neighbour, Egypt.

Throughout their entire history, the people of Israel have aspired to live in peace. Together with our constant call for peace with our neighbours, we have not spared any effort to seek, whether through direct or indirect contacts, a partner in this effort. Today, too, we continue to seek channels for dialogue and to build bridges to peace.

In recent years, since 1991, after the principles for negotiating peace in the Middle East were laid down at Madrid, we have achieved a number of important advances with the establishment of full peace between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the signing of interim accords with the Palestinians. Nevertheless, the road to full peace is still long, and negotiations with the Palestinians and with Syria and Lebanon still lie ahead of us.

Immediately after the last elections, the Government of Israel accepted the need to continue to advance the Oslo accords and has acted to implement them. In the past year we have spared no effort to implement those accords, but, unfortunately, the trust that is the lifeblood of the entire process has been undermined as a result of the failure of the Palestinians to carry out their commitments according to the agreements they have signed.

In the past year, while pursuing these efforts, we have endured many tests and have suffered ongoing terrorist attacks and bloodshed. Our deep-rooted aspiration for peace, security and tranquillity has been stained by the shedding of innocent blood, by the murder of men, women and children cut down by barbaric terrorist attacks. Yet despite our deep sorrow and mourning over the loss of those innocent lives, the hope for peace has not been extinguished in the hearts of the citizens of Israel.

The citizens of Israel have taken upon themselves great risks for peace, but there is none among them who is willing to continue to pay the bloody price that is being demanded in the name of peace. We must break this tragic and violent cycle. It is only through joint action in

confronting the terror that trust will be re-established and the doubts regarding intentions be removed.

As I stated in my remarks at the fifty-first session of this Assembly, all Israel is united in its deep desire for peace and for a life of calm and security. In Israel, both right and left are united in this quest.

If trust can be restored, if the principle of reciprocity is honoured, it will be possible for us to proceed. We have already proved our willingness to do so, through our decisions and actions since taking office and in the signing and implementation of the Hebron agreement in all its aspects.

Peace cannot live side by side with continued incitement, hostility, violence and terror. Peace means, in essence, the unequivocal and irreversible abandonment of violence. Dialogue, negotiation, compromise and the honouring of agreements — those are the path to peace.

These principles apply throughout the world and must apply also in the Middle East. The existence of two parallel tracks, one on which negotiations are pursued while a second track of violence, terror and bloodshed continues unimpeded, is totally unacceptable. This is a direct challenge and affront to the very concept of peace.

Terror does not suddenly erupt from nowhere. It is not a spontaneous phenomenon. Too often we have seen terrorist leaders and their organizations adopt the facade of innocent and peaceful organizations, charitable and welfare organizations, while under this cover they contribute to the preparation and perpetration of vicious terrorist attacks. Terror can be likened to a volcano ready to erupt at any moment, whose boiling lava threatens to destroy all who lie in its path.

Those who resort to terror are seeking not only to kill Israelis but also to hurt their own brethren. Terror cannot be accepted as a legitimate tool for resolving differences. It must be rejected, absolutely and unequivocally, and it must be fought unrelentingly. We will not agree to live under its constant threat.

The words of the President of the United States and of the Foreign Minister of Russia at this Assembly just a few days ago are important and should guide us all in this matter. I quote President Clinton when he spoke from this very rostrum:

"terrorism is always a crime and never a justifiable political act." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings, 5th meeting*]

Thus, the international community bears the responsibility for ensuring that terrorism enjoys no political support, recognition or legitimacy, not even implicitly.

In the 1993 Oslo accords, the Palestinian Authority and Arafat, its leader, undertook in the name of the Palestinian people to fight terrorism. They reaffirmed this commitment again in the 1995 Interim Agreement, again one year ago at the Washington summit and again in the Hebron agreement. Much to our consternation, it has been proved that this commitment has not been upheld as required, thus causing the present crisis of confidence.

Israel stands firmly upon its call to the Palestinian Authority to fulfil its promise to fight relentlessly against terror. The Authority must act jointly and in full cooperation with us against terrorism and violence. We seek neither to dictate nor to coerce. We seek merely the implementation of signed agreements. The fight against terror, in our humble opinion, is also in the Palestinian interest.

In response to the repeated crises in the process caused by the failure of the Palestinian Authority to live up to its commitments, Israel proposes a binding code of conduct for relations between us. This code should include, first, the rejection of violence as a means for achieving political goals; secondly, preservation of the framework of direct negotiations and agreement to refrain from attempts to transfer disputes and negotiations onto the international stage; thirdly, the institutionalization of permanent channels of communication, including in times of crisis; fourthly, a cessation of incitement and the call to violence and jihad, and their replacement with the language of reconciliation and mutual respect; and, fifthly, the advancement and encouragement of normalization and support for regional activities.

The purpose of this code of conduct is to facilitate uninterrupted negotiations and crisis management, and to create an atmosphere of dialogue. This code must respond to the sensitivities and needs of both sides. We believe that the adoption of the above principles will allow us to overcome the present crisis and help in preventing future ones as the negotiations proceed. These rules of the game will also contribute to renewed trust

between the leaders and greater confidence between the peoples.

In the wake of the visit to the Middle East of the United States Secretary of State, renewed agreement has been reached to continue the efforts at restoring the peace process to its proper track. We have been conducting intensive talks in recent days, with the assistance of the United States, both in Washington and here, with a view to resuming the negotiations and advancing our efforts to reach a permanent settlement with the Palestinians.

Israel values and appreciates the action of the United States Secretary of State and her commitment and efforts to extricate the peace process from its current impasse, to bring the parties closer together and to ensure the success of the negotiations. We are fully committed to these efforts.

Israel reaffirms its proposal to conduct accelerated negotiations, according to an agreed timetable, on permanent status. We propose conducting negotiations in which the sides will agree upon the desired outcomes and the way towards achieving them. This proposal is intended to hasten the attainment of a peaceful settlement, not to delay it. This is also our call and our proposal to the Palestinian Authority.

The international community can play an important role in facilitating the dialogue between the sides, which will make it possible for us to resolve our differences through direct negotiations. It is only through direct negotiations that we can bring this process to a successful conclusion. One-sided international declarations, dictates or pressures will not help. Attempts to internationalize the dispute and to transfer the arena of negotiations to the United Nations and other international forums only serve to create unnecessary obstacles and to make already entrenched positions more rigid.

The comprehensive peace we yearn for will not be achieved until we reach peace agreements with Syria and Lebanon. It is imperative to reach understandings and agreement that will enable us to renew negotiations and to resolve all the matters at issue between us. We expect to find in Syria and its leadership a partner in the search for a just peace. If Syria has indeed made a strategic choice in favour of peace — the “peace of the brave”, as claimed by its leadership — then we must explore together every possible avenue, at any place and at any time, for renewing the talks between us.

Israel cannot accept the continued violence and terror on its northern border. The terrorist activities of organizations such as Hezbollah and the fear of Katyusha rockets and attacks upon our cities and towns bear the threat of ongoing regional tension and continued bloodshed. There is no territorial dispute between Israel and Lebanon. We wish to see a sovereign, free and independent Lebanon acting determinedly against the terrorist organizations that operate from its territory.

If we are to reach peace, we cannot make do only with agreements and contracts. The reality of peace means normalization, open borders, freedom of movement, commerce and cooperation for the benefit of the entire region. These are the soul and essence of peace. Normalization is not a prize or a gift for Israel alone.

The decisions of the Foreign Ministers of the Arab League at their recent meeting in Cairo, just over one week ago, stand in direct contradiction to the aspirations for peace and undermine its foundations. The attempts to prevent normalization with Israel, to freeze the level of existing relations with it, to close liaison and interests offices between Israel and Arab neighbours and to reactivate the Arab boycott add up, in practice, to a boycott of peace itself. This is a destructive policy which is reversing the process.

The ongoing and intentional freeze of the multilateral talks also has a deleterious effect on the entrenchment of peace. The multilateral talks were meant and should serve as a platform and incentive for building peace. We must promote the bilateral and multilateral channels alike and not make one conditional upon the other, nor create further obstacles and barriers on the road to peace. The question mark hanging over the regional economic conference scheduled to take place later this year in Doha, Qatar, is further evidence of this negative drive.

The countries of the Middle East that are party to the peace effort have a common interest in regional stability and the advancement of prosperity and well-being for all the nations of the region. We face together the growing shortage of water and the ever-expanding desert. We are also facing dangers from within our region that threaten to undermine the stability of the regimes of various nations and to plunge the entire region into violence, war and bloodshed.

It was only a few years ago that the entire world was forced into forming a coalition to combat an aggressive dictator who sought to conquer a neighbouring country and to terrorize our entire region. Today, we face new and even more extreme dangers, but the lessons of recent experience have not been learned and many countries turn a blind eye to the threat.

The leadership of Iran continues to speak in terms that threaten the State of Israel and call for its destruction. Yet the international community continues to remain deaf and refuses to speak out against Iran's policies, declarations and actions.

Iran's efforts, like those of Iraq, to acquire operational weapons of mass destruction of all kinds represent the greatest threat to security and stability in the Middle East and beyond. The ramifications of Iran's weapons programme extend far beyond the geographical confines of our region. They threaten the security of other members of the international community and their interests.

Israel reiterates its call to the members of the international family of nations — and at their head the United States, Russia and the members of the European Union and of the Commonwealth of Independent States — to exercise the full weight of their influence and to take concrete steps to prevent this development, which represents a threat to the existence of the State of Israel.

After the establishment, as we hope, of peace treaties between Israel and every country of the region, it will be possible to create a regional security system that would provide multilateral and shared solutions to the range of security problems in the Middle East, including a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. These are our goals and we must act to achieve them.

Israel is an active and responsible member of the family of nations represented in this body. However, 50 years after the United Nations adopted, on 29 November 1947, the resolution calling for the establishment of the State of Israel, we are still denied our equal rights in this Organization.

We attach great importance to the fundamental reform of the United Nations work. We also share the opinion of other United Nations Member countries that believe that the Organization urgently requires greater efficiency and a redirecting of its valuable but limited resources towards its truly important tasks. At the same time, we are convinced

that no reform can be completed so long as the question of Israel's membership of a regional group remains unresolved. We call upon this Organization to correct this anomaly.

Much to our chagrin, in the last year we have seen an intensification of the political campaign waged against Israel at the United Nations. This campaign only impedes the peace process and further undermines confidence between the parties. We call upon the Member States to refrain from lending their support to such resolutions. The time has come for this Assembly to reduce the number of resolutions on the Middle East that it adopts each year and to contribute positively to creating an atmosphere conducive to direct negotiations between the parties.

As part of Israel's international and regional commitment and of its credo as a State, we are engaged in cooperative programmes with many countries, with which we share the experience and knowledge we have acquired in various fields. Israel attaches great importance to its international cooperation programme and to assisting various peoples to address the challenges of development and the hazards of nature, hunger and disease.

Over more than three decades, tens of thousands of trainees have participated in courses in Israel and in their own countries within the framework of Israel's cooperation and assistance programme in the fields of education, health, agriculture, industry, social affairs and leadership. We are especially proud of the participation in recent years of trainees from Arab countries, amongst them Palestinians. These trainees are emissaries of goodwill, ambassadors of peace, who bear with them the message and the great hope of human well-being. As in the words of the prophet:

"Each shall help his neighbour and make him strong".

This year, the Jewish people in Israel and around the world marks the jubilee of its national revival. Fifty years ago, the Jewish people restored its national sovereignty in its ancient homeland. Throughout the dark days of our 2,000-year dispersion, we dreamt of the day that we would renew our national life in the land of our forefathers, the land of Israel.

It is the privilege of our generation to fulfil this aspiration. The Jewish people has returned and built up

its land. The Jewish people is once again gathering in its ancient home and has succeeded in building a vibrant and democratic society, a flourishing economy, science, research and industry.

For the past 50 years, we have laboured to ensure Israel's security and independence, while always seeking peace and good-neighbourly relations in our region. Fifty years on, the State of Israel is an irremovable reality.

This week, we mark the beginning of the Jewish new year. At this holy time, every Jew turns his eye towards the heavens with a prayer in his heart for the peace of the world, the end of misery and a new dawn of hope for all. On this day of remembrance, the blow of the shofar is accompanied by the prayer:

"may the year and its troubles pass and a new year and its blessings begin".

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, His Excellency Mr. Nicolae Tabacaru.

Mr. Tabacaru (Republic of Moldova) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the President wholeheartedly on his election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. I am especially pleased at the election of a distinguished representative of Ukraine, a country which is a neighbour and friend of the Republic of Moldova, to this important post. After declaring their independence six years ago, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine worked to create prosperous and democratic societies. I am convinced that the President, with his great skills and with the support of all the Member States, will be able to discharge with distinction this lofty mission which has been entrusted to him during this crucial period for the United Nations.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the contribution made by Mr. Razali Ismail in his capacity as President during the previous session. I wish also to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his efforts to reform this global Organization.

It is my honour and privilege to address the General Assembly for the first time, and I would like to convey a message of friendship and solidarity from the people of the Republic of Moldova.

My country, which is very much devoted to the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations, strongly supports the reform process of the United Nations. That is why we have taken note with interest of the reform programme proposed by the Secretary-General. This package of proposals is designed to achieve a reform in order to deal better with the challenges of the coming millennium. We have welcomed such initiatives and we support them.

It is clear that the reform of the United Nations can move forward only if the financial crisis of the Organization is settled. There is no doubt that Member States must fulfil their financial obligations on time and in full. At the same time, it is indeed necessary to reform the system for the payment of contributions in order to achieve a fair assessment, one that better takes into account the principle of capacity to pay of each country. For our part, we will spare no effort to honour our financial obligations.

The Republic of Moldova fully supports the efforts of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. In the five years since our country was admitted to membership in the United Nations, we have co-sponsored several resolutions in this important field of activity.

In the field of disarmament, last year the delegation of the Republic of Moldova likewise voted in favour of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Consequently, I am pleased to report that on 24 September I signed this important Treaty on the complete ban on nuclear testing. We are convinced that the implementation of this Treaty can enhance international security.

The Republic of Moldova also supports the efforts of the international community to limit the use of and ultimately to eliminate certain conventional weapons which have injurious and indiscriminate effects, including anti-personnel landmines. We are ready to contribute to the efforts being made to obtain these objectives.

The positive developments which have characterized the activity of the Organization in recent years have brought about certain concepts and the diversification of mechanisms for action in the field of international peace and security. Some of these mechanisms could be implemented soon. Perhaps I need not stress here the usefulness and benefits of the United Nations standby forces, which all Member States welcome. Yet, I wish to

emphasize that the Republic of Moldova would like to contribute to this system and that last year our Government expressed its readiness to take part in the United Nations standby forces. That is why my country intends to provide to the United Nations Secretariat as soon as possible information concerning contingents and equipment which are available for this purpose.

Moreover, the Republic of Moldova is considering the possibility of taking part in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We believe that our country has already accumulated a certain amount of experience in this field through its participation in a variety of international manoeuvres.

Militant separatism has become one of the main threats to international peace and security after the cold war period. Totalitarian regimes have engendered ethnic conflicts and frictions in certain countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Some conflicts are rooted in age-old animosities. Others, as is the case in the conflict involving the Republic of Moldova which broke out five years ago, are inspired by and supported from the outside, in order to recreate a form of by-gone domination.

This is the reason why I would like to emphasize the fact that the recent separatist trends which have appeared in the newly independent States who are Members of the United Nations have nothing in common with the legitimate aspiration of peoples to achieve self-determination. In our view, attempts to construe the right to self-determination as the right of an ethnic or national community to establish its own government and to splinter off are real dangers to international and regional security. Moreover, the right to self-determination is treated in the Charter of the United Nations as a principle which cannot serve to justify the violation of the principle of the independence and territorial integrity of a State. Nevertheless, it is imperative to define this principle of self-determination more precisely in order to avoid any subjective interpretations.

It is quite clear that the stability of small and large States hinges on a number of factors, such as the rule of law, respect for human rights, democracy and economic development. Our Government is therefore striving to establish an equitable social system based on the respect for the dignity of the human person. And yet, the process of economic reform, with all its inherent problems, is retarding the achievement of these objectives.

The high social costs of transition are felt throughout society. Despite all of these difficulties, we are

nevertheless determined to continue the process of economic reform. We rely on the support of developed countries, the United Nations and other international agencies and organizations during this decisive moment in the reform of our country. I take this opportunity to express the gratitude of the people and Government of my country to those States and international institutions which have supported the strengthening of democracy and market-economy mechanisms in our Republic. Furthermore, I note with satisfaction that my country has made progress in building its civil society and in establishing democratic institutions.

Nevertheless, it is a paradox that under such favourable conditions we have not succeeded in achieving a final settlement of the conflict which broke out in the summer of 1992. Yet, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova endeavour to find pragmatic solutions in order to maintain the integrity of the country.

Following negotiations with the leaders of the separatist region, and with the mediation of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, an agreement was reached between the parties involved with regard to the general principles of the settlement of the dispute. A memorandum was likewise signed on the normalization of relations between the authorities of the Republic of Moldova and the Transdnestrian region.

At the same time, the Presidents of Ukraine and the Russian Federation and the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) signed a joint Declaration emphasizing the importance of the parties' commitment in the memorandum to conduct their relations in the context of the existing borders of the country by granting special status to the eastern region of the Republic of Moldova.

In view of the provisions of the memorandum, an ad hoc commission was established to negotiate the legal status of the Transdnester region. To our regret, negotiations in the Commission are deadlocked because of the intransigent and highly politicized position taken by the Transdnester side. Therefore, no mutually acceptable solution has been found on the key elements for resolving the dispute, namely, the legal definition of the status of Transdnester and the powers of the parties during the transitional period. In opposing the provisions of the accord, the Transdnester side insists on a settlement which runs counter to the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova and is prejudicial to the principle of sovereignty

over the territory of the country. Despite the commitments they assumed by signing the memorandum, the separatist leaders have, exceeding their power, enacted certain unconstitutional laws establishing a so-called customs border in Transdnister and a "commission for the delimitation of the State border in the region". In addition, a series of unlawful acts have been committed in the area controlled by the peacekeeping forces.

I must therefore emphasize that it is vital to ensure more active mediation by the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the OSCE mission, as well as stronger action by the international community, led by the United Nations. I should like to say the conflict in Transdnister could destabilize the political and military situation, and threatens subregional and regional peace and security. We know that the separatist regime in Transdnister is supported by a powerful paramilitary force having the most modern weapons, obtained from the equipment available to forces of the Russian Federation illegally stationed on our territory. At the same time, the leaders of those opposed to constitutional authority are trying to obtain weapons belonging to the Russian military forces, while opposing the complete withdrawal of the troops of the Russian Federation and their weapons. It must therefore be pointed out that disarming and breaking up the Transdnister paramilitary groups is as important as the withdrawal of Russian troops.

Both those processes must be monitored by international observers. We have reached the conclusion that an immediate and effective solution to this conflict requires more active involvement by international bodies as well as the countries of the region and even the major Powers. We are awaiting such involvement, for our recent experience demonstrates that all attempts made by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to settle the conflict in the Transdnister region through dialogue and negotiations have failed. The interests of the separatist leaders are subordinate to other interests, entirely political, going beyond our national context.

There is a danger that the conflict will continue indefinitely. We believe that the problem of the eastern region of the Republic of Moldova could already have been resolved by peaceful means and in a civilized fashion if the separatist regime did not receive strong support from outside. More often than not such support has been given deliberately, for reasons of geopolitical interests, but sometimes the separatists in the eastern region of the Republic of Moldova have received unintentional, indirect support through the unlawful trade activities of companies and firms in developed countries. We hope that the Governments of countries where certain undertakings are giving political and technical support to the separatist

regime in Transdnister will put an end to such activity. These actions can no longer be tolerated for they constitute *ipso facto* direct interference in the internal affairs of the Republic of Moldova.

The illegal stationing of military contingents of the Russian Federation on the territory of my country continues. The deadline set by the 1994 Moldovan-Russian Agreement on the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory is 21 October 1997. The fact that for three years the State Duma, unlike our Parliament, has failed to ratify the Agreement cannot be excused or explained. We have been assured on several occasions, at the highest level, that the question of the withdrawal of troops will be settled, and it is regrettable that this problem remains unresolved.

We understand, of course, that the failure to ratify the 1994 Accord by the State Duma entails legal complications for the Russian Government. However, we believe that the time has come to find a solution to the question of troop withdrawal. In accordance with the principles of international law, no foreign army can be stationed on the territory of another State without its free consent. In addition, international organizations, particularly the OSCE, strongly support the unconditional, immediate, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Finally, Russia's admission to the Council of Europe as a fully fledged member, was conditional on the timely withdrawal of its troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

We believe that the political forces in the State Duma opposing troop withdrawal will also be sensitive to the legal commitments of the Russian Federation. We hope that the removal of armaments and the withdrawal of troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova will be speeded up and completed as soon as possible. This course would certainly serve the interests of both countries and would properly reflect the high level reached in the development of relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation.

In conclusion, I express the fervent hope that the work of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly will take place in a climate of solidarity, with a realistic and constructive approach to the complex problems facing the world at the end of this century. My delegation, like those of other Member States, is ready to make its contribution to achieve the purposes of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.